

HARRY S. TRUMAN  
SENATORIAL PRIMARY ELECTION  
OF 1940

by

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B. A., Oklahoma State University, 1955

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A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1961

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## PREFACE

My interest in Harry S. Truman's senatorial primary election of 1940 as a thesis topic developed out of a discussion held between Truman and members of Kansas State University's Political Science Club. As a participant in this seminar I was impressed by the manner in which the former President answered the questions of the students. In no instance did he attempt evasion nor did he indicate a patronizing attitude; instead he acted in a direct and straightforward manner, answering questions with vigorous sincerity.

This experience awakened an interest to investigate the early political life of the individual who was reputed to be "the man from Pendergast". It did not appear that Truman exemplified the popular stereotype of the machine politician. He displayed a political sense which went beyond a simple obsequiousness to a political machine. A desire was aroused to obtain a better understanding of the political nature of the individual who rose to the office of the Presidency even though he was closely allied with one of the most discredited political organizations in the United States.

An inquiry into Truman's political career revealed that the issue of Pendergastism played an important role in the senatorial primary election of 1940 in Missouri. During the campaign for renomination, Truman did not disassociate himself from Thomas J. Pendergast when it seemed apparent that it would be prudent to

do so, yet Truman won the renomination. These impressions indicated that Truman possessed political attributes far more important than his close connection with the Kansas City Democratic party organization controlled by Pendergast. Therefore, I decided to explore the 1940 senatorial primary election campaign in Missouri in order to better understand the political nature of Harry S. Truman.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Professors Louis H. Douglas and Joseph Hajda of the History, Political Science, and Philosophy Department who have contributed their valuable time and knowledge to the final development of this study.

The author is indebted to former Governor Lloyd C. Stark of Missouri for permission to examine his private papers.

## INTRODUCTION

This study is principally an inquiry into the political nature of Harry S. Truman. The selection of a party primary afforded an opportunity to observe the practical politician in his own element, the political arena. The paper concerns itself with the situations and circumstances involved in an actual political contest and how the political combatants reacted to these realities. The intention is not to analyze the voting behavior of the Missouri electorate, but rather to note how the successful politician reacts within his own sphere.

The direct primary concept attempted to introduce a greater degree of popular democracy into the nominating process. It was believed by the reform-minded that machine politicians and behind-the-scenes organization maneuverings would diminish when control of the nominating procedure was placed in the hands of the people. Organized machine politics played an integral role in the Missouri Democratic senatorial primary race of 1940, largely because candidate Harry S. Truman was an active member of the Kansas City Democratic organization, owned and controlled by Thomas J. Pendergast.

## CHAPTER I

## THE RISE AND FALL OF THOMAS J. PENDERGAST

Thomas J. Pendergast arrived in Kansas City from St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1890. He was summoned there by his older brother, Jim Pendergast, to assist in the latter's business activities. The elder Pendergast was a political figure of some note; he was a member of the city council and had begun the creation of the political organization which his younger brother would develop into the most dominant influence in state politics. Tom Pendergast immediately entered into political activity by becoming a precinct worker, thus starting the climb upward to political dominance. His progress was rapid and upon the death of his brother Jim in 1911, Tom assumed leadership of the "goat" faction of the Democratic party in Kansas City.<sup>1</sup>

In the political battles that Tom Pendergast encountered in his rise to power he developed a practical philosophy of action. In an interview with Ralph Coghlan, Pendergast stated:

There are no alibis in politics. The delivery of votes is what counts. And it is efficient organization in every little ward and precinct that determines national as well as local elections. . . All the ballyhoo and showmanship such as they have at the national conventions is all right. It's a great show. It gives folks a run for their money. It makes everyone feel good. But the man who makes the organi-

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1. For an account of Thomas J. Pendergast's political career see, Maurice M. Milligan, Missouri Waltz (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), pp. 44-68.

zation possible is the man who delivers the votes, and he doesn't deliver them by oratory. Politics is a business, just like anything else.<sup>2</sup>

True to this business-like concept of politics, Fendergast built a machine capable of delivering large majorities for the candidates he favored. In the Democratic primary election of August 7, 1934, when Fendergast supported Harry S. Truman for the senatorial nomination, he was able to provide Truman with a Jackson County vote of 137,529 while Truman's two opponents in the race garnered a combined total of only 10,437 votes.<sup>3</sup>

When these electoral figures are compared with the results of the August 6, 1940, Democratic senatorial primary race in which Truman again was a participant we note that Truman was able to poll only 49,974 votes whereas his two adversaries went on to obtain a combined total of 55,413 votes.<sup>4</sup> The latter was the first state-wide election held since the imprisonment of T. J. Fendergast in May of 1939. Another indication of the Jackson County machine's ability to produce the vote for candidates who had obtained the support of Fendergast can be noted by looking at the election results of the Democratic gubernatorial primary of 1936. In this race the Kansas City organization threw its support behind Lloyd C. Stark. Stark proved so popular in the Jackson County area that he received

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2. Ralph Coghlan, "Boss Fendergast" Forum and Century, XCVII (February, 1937), p.70.

3. Missouri, Secretary of State, Official Manual State of Missouri 1936-36, compiled by Dewight H. Brown (Jefferson City, 1937), p. 410.

4. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1941-1942, p. 366.



168,724 votes while his Democratic opponent in the primary race obtained 3,785.<sup>5</sup> This contest clearly illustrated the power which the Fendergast organization could muster come election day.

Two incidents contributed heavily to the elevation of Fendergast to the high position he held in Missouri politics. One was the election of Joseph B. Shannon to the House of Representatives and the other was a veto exercised by Missouri's chief executive.

Joseph B. Shannon was "Boss" Tom's chief rival in Jackson County Democratic politics. Shannon was the leader of the "rabbit" faction of the Democratic party and in this capacity waged continuous warfare with Fendergast's "goat" faction. When Shannon decided to run for Congress in 1930 Fendergast eagerly supported his candidacy and as a result became the sole political strong man on the Kansas City scene when Shannon went on to victory in the election.<sup>6</sup>

The second situation which paved the way for Fendergast to extend his influence came about when Governor Caulfield vetoed the Congressional redistricting act passed by the Missouri legislature. The Governor's veto necessitated the electing of Congressmen at large in 1932. Because of this situation, potential candidates for Congress came to court the favor of the man who could provide large majorities in Kansas City. The results of

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5. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1937-1938, p. 354.

6. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 75.



this election are enlightening for they highlight the power of the Jackson County machine. Of the ten individuals who obtained the support of Pendergast in the primary election, nine were nominated in the primary and eventually went on to victory in the general election.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, of the thirteen men who made up the Missouri delegation to the House of Representatives, nine paid homage to the Jackson County leader. Pendergast's influence now reached into the outstate regions of Missouri and the newspapers began to refer to the Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City as "Uncle Tom's Cabin".

The election of 1936 was the highpoint of Pendergast power but it also was the election which started the decline of "Boss" Pendergast from his high position in Missouri politics. It had taken Thomas J. Pendergast forty-six years to reach his position of political dominance but in less than three years he would be incarcerated in the Federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas.

In 1936, a Citizens Committee was formed and carried on an investigation concerning suspected voting irregularities. This investigation took place prior to the 1936 elections and when the group had accumulated enough evidence they requested United States District Judge Merrill E. Otis to empanel a grand jury. The judge advised the interested citizens to turn their evidence over to the United States District Attorney, Maurice M. Milligan.<sup>8</sup>

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7. John H. Penton, Politics in the Border States (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1957), pp. 136-138.

8. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 145.

Milligan's office was powerless to act until a crime had been committed and a federal statute violated. The election of 1936 was held and passed without incident, but behind the scenes the United States District Attorney's office in Kansas was moving into action. After a preliminary investigation of the election returns the United States District Attorney believed that it was time to call a grand jury.<sup>9</sup>

Milligan had to locate a federal statute which permitted his office to act. He came up with a Civil Rights Statute which was passed after the Civil War. The statute states:

If two or more persons conspire to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any citizen in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the Constitution or laws of the United States, or because of his having exercised the same . . . they shall be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned not more than ten years . . .<sup>10</sup>

Milligan believed that this statute had been violated and that it would empower his office to prosecute.

The District Attorney's first act was to petition for issuance of a court order which enabled the Federal Marshal to impound all election records, books, ballots, and ballot boxes which were under the care of the local election board. With the aid of the Federal Bureau of Investigation these impounded election materials were carefully analyzed for irregularities.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Ibid., pp. 146-147.

10. U.S., Code, Title 18, Chap. 13 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), IV, 3207.

11. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 150.

In January, 1937, the grand jury handed down its first indictment involving twenty individuals and, before the election fraud cases were to end two years later, District Attorney Milligan and his associates were to convict 259 persons out of a total of 278 defendants. Nineteen defendants were dismissed for various reasons but not one person was acquitted by the judge or jury.<sup>12</sup>

The Jackson County machine was in disrepute and the trials indicated that upwards of 50,000 "ghost" votes were on the county voting lists.<sup>13</sup> These "ghost" votes sometimes were cast for people deceased, in other instances as a result of fraudulent registration. While the machine had come under heavy attack from the Federal Government, the leadership in the person of Thomas J. Pendergast was not immediately affected by these voting frauds.

The specific issue which brought down Pendergast from his perch as political overlord of the State of Missouri was an insurance rate scandal. On December 30, 1929, the fire insurance companies in the State of Missouri informed the State Superintendent of Insurance, Joseph B. Thompson, that a rate increase of 16 2/3 per cent was going into effect. The Superintendent of Insurance did not approve this increase, but the companies proceeded to collect the new rate on their policies. The companies also sought an injunction in the United States District Court to prevent the

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12. Ibid., p. 166.

13. Ibid., p. 158.

Superintendent from interfering in the collection of the increased rates.<sup>14</sup>

The court ordered that the money collected by the increased rate be impounded while the contending parties were locked in litigation. Robert Emmett O'Malley, who was appointed Superintendent of Insurance in 1935, entered into negotiation with the insurance companies and in May of 1935, reached a settlement with the companies. This settlement ended the litigation and the impounded premiums, which now totaled more than \$9,000,000, were to be distributed in such a manner that the insurance companies would receive 80 per cent of the impounded money and the policy holders 20 per cent. The court approved this settlement and ordered the impounded money to be distributed as agreed upon by the two parties.<sup>15</sup>

This agreement apparently ended the long battle between the State of Missouri and the insurance companies, but a retiring official of the Department of Internal Revenue confided to a reporter of the Kansas City Star about certain irregularities which were discovered concerning the income tax statement filed by the law firm of Hicks and Felonie. This firm acted as counsel for the fire insurance companies in the contest over increased insurance rates.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Maurice M. Milligan, "Statement of Facts to the Court in the Case of the United States v. T. J. Pendergast No. 14567." These facts were presented in Kansas City Missouri, May 22, 1939.

15. Ibid.

16. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 171.

The irregularities involved checks from fourteen insurance companies totaling \$100,500 which had been made payable to the law firm and forwarded to Charles R. Street.<sup>17</sup> Street was an official of one of the insurance companies and acted as the chief representative of the insurance companies in their litigation with the State of Missouri. When Street was questioned concerning whether he received the money, he answered in the affirmative but would not divulge the name of the person to whom he claimed he had passed the money. Later, Street informed the Department of Internal Revenue by letter that he could not make known the name of the recipient of the money until the ocean liner Queen Mary docked in New York City. The passenger list of the liner indicated that T. J. Pendergast was a passenger.<sup>18</sup>

This was the information that the Star reporter received from the retiring governmental official and which he immediately related to Governor Lloyd C. Stark of Missouri. The Governor informed District Attorney Milligan about the affair and a conference was held in Washington, D. C., to discuss the entire situation. It was decided at this conference to undertake a complete investigation into the entire insurance case.<sup>19</sup>

The investigation revealed that a deal had been made between Pendergast and Street in which a settlement favorable to the insurance companies was reached. The original price agreed upon

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17. Milligan, "Statement of Facts".

18. Ibid.

19. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 173.



by Pendergast and Street was \$500,000; later this figure was raised to \$750,000 payable to T. J. Pendergast.<sup>20</sup> The individual who was the messenger between Street and Pendergast was A. L. McCormack of St. Louis. McCormack was the past president of the Missouri Fire Insurance Agent's Association and was the person who finally related the entire sordid insurance rate scandal to Maurice M. Milligan, the Federal District Attorney.<sup>21</sup> Milligan obtained the facts of the bribery from McCormack when he brought pressure to bear on the executives of the fourteen insurance companies involved. The District Attorney threatened to involve all of the insurance officials in the case, if the name of the individual who eventually received the money was not forthcoming. The threat to embarrass the insurance executives proved successful and McCormack was persuaded to tell all he knew concerning the transactions between Street and Pendergast.<sup>22</sup>

McCormack told how he, at different times, conveyed a total of \$440,000 to Pendergast, of which Pendergast kept \$315,000 and distributed the rest between McCormack and Superintendent of Insurance O'Malley. The remaining \$310,000, due Pendergast from the agreement reached with Street, was not paid because of the death of Street before the transaction could be completed.<sup>23</sup>

When Pendergast's income tax returns for the years 1935 and 1936 were checked it was noted that the money he received from

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20. Milligan, "Statement of Facts".

21. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 180.

22. Ibid., p. 179.

23. Milligan, "Statement of Facts".

Street was not declared. The federal government had a clear case of income tax evasion against the dominant political figure in the State of Missouri. Pendergast was indicted on income tax evasion but before the case came to trial he pleaded guilty to the charge and threw himself on the mercy of the court.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas J. Pendergast was sentenced to serve fifteen months in Leavenworth Penitentiary and fined \$10,000. He was further ordered to pay to the United States Treasury \$434,000 for unpaid back taxes.<sup>25</sup>

When Pendergast had served his sentence he was paroled from prison and placed on probation. The probation ruling prevented Pendergast from engaging in politics, and because he was technically a felon, his rights of citizenship were temporarily revoked.<sup>26</sup>

This was a severe set back to the man who was the dominant power in Missouri Democratic politics, but his name and what it represented still played a key part in the Missouri Democratic primary of 1940.

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24. Ibid.

25. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 201.

26. Ibid., p. 212.



## CHAPTER II

### PROFILES OF THE CANDIDATES

All three of the candidates for the Democratic senatorial nomination, Harry S. Truman, Lloyd C. Stark, and Maurice M. Milligan were inextricably involved with the forces of Pendergastism. Truman, the incumbent senator, was a member of the Pendergast organization and his two opponents in the campaign, Stark and Milligan, both decided to unseat Truman by waging a vigorous campaign against Pendergastism. The relationships which the three antagonists had with Pendergast can be better understood when profiles of the candidates are compared.

#### Harry S. Truman

In 1934, after T. J. Pendergast had consolidated his control over Kansas City by supporting his chief rival Joseph B. Shannon for Congress and extending his influence into the out-state regions by capitalizing on the Governor's veto of the redistricting act, Truman was the nominee backed by the Pendergast organization for United States Senator. He was nominated in the primary election in August, 1934, and went on to victory in the November election with a majority of 262,000 votes over his Republican opponent.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1941-42, p. 53.

Harry S. Truman was born in Lamar, Missouri, on May 8, 1884; his family moved to Independence, Missouri in 1890. He began his education in the Independence public schools in 1892 and graduated from high school in 1901. On June 14, 1905, Truman joined the Missouri National Guard and became a charter member of Battery B. He went on active military duty as a First Lieutenant of Field Artillery on September 26, 1917, and served with valor in France during World War I. At the cessation of hostilities Truman was discharged from the military service with the rank of Major.<sup>2</sup>

Returning to his home in Independence, Truman entered politics and was elected Judge of Jackson County Court on November, 1922. Although defeated for re-election in 1924, Truman won the office of Presiding Judge of the Jackson County Court in 1926, and was re-elected to this office in 1930.

The office of county judge in Missouri is not of a judicial nature. It is concerned primarily with administrative matters of the county, comparable to the functions of county commissioner in Kansas. Truman in his capacity as county judge was successful and efficient. The Kansas City Times had this to say for Judge Truman, when he sought re-election in 1930:

Judge Truman is running for re-election. He has given the county an able, honest and efficient administration. We believe he should be re-elected on his record especially in the efficient and economical expenditure of the \$6,500,000

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2. Ibid., p. 53.

road fund . . . Efficient, unselfish public service is not so common that it should be dispensed with merely for partisan reasons. The faithful and competent public servant should be retained in office.<sup>3</sup>

As far as his future political career was concerned this position afforded little opportunity for further political advancement. Truman, however, held at the same time an auxiliary position as State Re-employment Director. This position gave him an opportunity to extend his influence outside the confines of Jackson County, but this was still not enough to warrant his selection as the organization's candidate for United States Senator.

Pendergast had difficulty in persuading individuals to run in the primary. He first offered his support to former United States Senator, James Reed. When Reed refused the candidacy, Pendergast turned to his old rival Joseph B. Shannon, a member of the House of Representatives. Shannon also declined the offer of Pendergast. When Shannon refused, Pendergast attempted to convince James P. Aylward, the State's Democratic party chairman, to run for the nomination. Aylward considered the proposal but eventually turned it down. At last the organization turned to the Jackson County Judge.<sup>4</sup>

Truman earlier had sought the aid of Pendergast in securing the Democratic nomination for governor but had been turned down. He accepted the offer of Pendergast to seek the nomination for United States Senator. His chief opponents in the primary were

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3. Kansas City Times, October 17, 1930, p. 3.

4. Jonathan Daniels, The Man of Independence (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1950) pp. 165-168.

Congressman J. L. Milligan, a brother of the United States District Attorney Maurice Milligan, and Congressman John J. Cochran of St. Louis.<sup>5</sup>

Milligan had the support of Bennett Clark, who had challenged the Pendergast organization in 1932, by winning the nomination for United States Senator on the Democratic ticket against the organization candidate Charles M. Howell. Cochran was well backed in St. Louis and had the support of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.<sup>6</sup>

In the campaign Truman was an avid defender of the Roosevelt Administration, while his opponents attacked him on his connection with the Kansas City political organization of Thomas J. Pendergast.<sup>7</sup> Truman won the race with a 40,745 vote margin over his nearest rival, John J. Cochran of St. Louis.<sup>8</sup> In the general election of 1934, Truman went on to defeat the Republican incumbent Senator, Roscoe C. Patterson, by a majority of 262,156 votes.<sup>9</sup>

Truman arrived in Washington an avowed advocate of the New Deal, and during his first term as United States Senator from Missouri he consistently voted for the Administration's program.<sup>10</sup>

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5. Ibid., p. 162.

6. Ibid., p. 170.

7. Ibid.

8. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1935-1936, p. 411.

9. Ibid., p. 299.

10. See roll call vote on: (1) Labor Relations Act, U.S. Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., 1935, LXXIV, Part 9, p. 9662; (2) Social Security Act (ibid.), Part 9, p. 9650; (3) Soil Conservation Act, U.S. Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1936, LXXX, Part 2, p. 2165; (4) Fair Labor Standards Act, U.S. Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 1st Sess., 1937, LXXXI, Part 7, p. 7957.

A major exception developed when T. J. Pendergast, through the urging of the White House, requested Truman to cast his vote for Alben Barkley for majority leader of the Senate. Truman had promised his vote to Pat Harrison of Mississippi and because of this fact turned down Pendergast's request and voted for the Mississippi Senator. Truman stated that this was the first time that Pendergast requested a favor of him since he became Senator.<sup>11</sup>

Truman became irritated by this behind-the-scenes activity of the White House. He resented the fact that the White House refused him the ordinary senatorial courtesy which he expected, informing Stephen Early that he hoped the Executive Branch was cognizant of the fact that he was the Senator representing the State of Missouri.<sup>12</sup>

Truman, as a freshman Senator, served on two major standing committees, Interstate Commerce and Appropriations.<sup>13</sup> Although he was the lowest ranking Democrat on both committees, he rendered important service in connection with the passage of the Transportation Act of 1940.<sup>14</sup>

During the time Truman was in Washington, the organization which lifted him out of obscurity and placed him in the United States Senate was encountering numerous difficulties. With the

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11. William P. Helm, Harry Truman (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947), pp. 48-51.

12. Ibid., p. 53.

13. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions, I, p. 147.

14. See Senate debates, U.S. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd. Sess., 1940, LXXXVI, Part 10, pp. 11537-11547.



disclosures of the 1936 voting frauds and the conviction of Thomas J. Pendergast on charges of income tax evasion, the Kansas City organization had become a symbol of corruption. When the voting scandals were disclosed, Truman remained silent. The only time that he spoke out officially concerning the matter was when Maurice M. Milligan's name came up before the Senate for re-nomination as Federal District Attorney for the Western District of Missouri. The exchange of remarks between senators Truman, Bridges and Clark during the debate over this re-confirmation of Milligan brought into perspective the atmosphere which enveloped the Kansas City political scene in 1938. The Congressional Record contains the following account of the debate:

Mr. Truman.

Mr. Milligan is now under consideration for confirmation on a reappointment. I have never thought, and I do not now think, that Mr. Milligan is qualified for the position of district attorney for the western district of Missouri. He is not professionally qualified, nor is he morally qualified.

My opposition to Mr. Milligan began long before vote frauds were brought to light in Kansas City. His morals and his political thinking never appealed to me.

The President has appointed him and the President wants him confirmed because of a situation in Kansas City due to vote fraud prosecutions in the Federal Court. Mr. Milligan has been made a hero by the Kansas City Star and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch as a result of these prosecutions. The implication has been that any capable lawyer I would recommend for district attorney in western Missouri would not do his duty in regard to vote fraud prosecutions. Every good lawyer and decent citizen in Kansas City and Jackson County is just as strongly opposed to vote frauds as are the Kansas City Star and Mr. Milligan.

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Mr. Bridges.

Does the Senator think that because a man has done his duty and prosecuted those guilty of vote frauds, some of the worst in the Nation, he ought to be penalized now?

Mr. Truman.

No; I do not. I have never asked that he be penalized. I asked that he be made special prosecutor to continue these prosecutions, and that a district attorney be appointed in Kansas City who was agreeable to the Democrats in that community. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Truman went on in his answer to Bridges to castigate the part played by the Federal Judges in Kansas City.

. . . The Federal Court at Kansas City is presided over by two as violently partisan judges as have ever sat on a Federal bench since the Federalist judges of Jefferson's administration. They are Merrill E. Otis and Albert L. Reeves. Mr. Reeves was appointed by that great advocate of clean nonpartisan government, Warren G. Harding, and Mr. Otis was appointed by that other great progressive nonpartisan, Calvin Coolidge.<sup>16</sup>

Truman also made mention of the fact that he thought it improper on Milligan's part to accept fees from bankruptcy cases in a court where he represented the Federal Government as district attorney. Truman went on to inform the Senate that

. . . a Jackson County, Mo., Democrat has as much chance of a fair trial in the Federal District Court of Western Missouri as a Jew would have in a Hitler court or a Trotsky follower before Stalin. Indictments have been wholesale. Convictions have been a foregone conclusion. Verdicts have been directed. This is Federal court justice in western Missouri, on the face of it a conspiracy between the partisan Federal judges and their bought and paid for district attorney.<sup>17</sup>

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15. U.S., Congressional Record, 75th. Cong., 3rd. Sess., 1938, LXXXIII, Part 2, p. 1962.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 1963.



Later on in the debate Senator Bridges, a Republican, went on to defend the choice of the President. He told the Senate that he had two pictures from the Missouri Non-Partisan News of October 23, 1936, which illustrated the scale on which vote fraud had taken place in Kansas City. One of these pictures portrayed a residence at 912 Tracy Street, Kansas City, Missouri. This residence was the home for 141 registered voters. The other photo was of a vacant lot at 700 Main Street, Kansas City, Missouri. This vacant lot was the reported address of 112 voters. Bridges continued on in this vein until Senator Bennett C. Clark of Missouri was recognized.<sup>18</sup>

Clark commented that he and Senator Truman were now on cordial terms despite the fact that Clark did not support Truman in the 1934 primary, but he went on to challenge the assertion that Maurice M. Milligan was of a low moral character. Truman claimed that he was not inferring that Milligan's private morals were in question, but that his public morals were under suspicion because he had accepted emoluments from a court in which he had to try cases. Clark stated that he was glad Truman made this distinction between private and public morals but continued to defend the man he first nominated for the position of District Attorney. The Senate finally confirmed Milligan for a second term as District Attorney of Western Missouri, with Truman voting against the confirmation.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 1964.

### Lloyd Crow Stark

Lloyd Crow Stark was born on a farm in Pike County, Missouri, on November 23, 1886. He began his education in the public schools and was appointed to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, by Champ Clark. After graduation from the Academy in 1908, he embarked on a four-year tour of sea duty. In 1912, he resigned his commission and returned to Pike County, entering the family nursery business.

After the United States entered World War I, Stark offered his services and was commissioned a captain in the Field Artillery. He served with distinction in France, was discharged from the military service in 1919 with the rank of major and then returned to civilian life and became prominent in local civic affairs.<sup>20</sup>

In a meeting with T. J. Pendergast on October 15, 1935, at Pendergast's political headquarters in Kansas City, Stark obtained his endorsement for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination. Pendergast stated that "Major Stark has more independent strength, in my opinion, than any other candidate. I think he will make Missouri a splendid governor."<sup>21</sup> In 1936, as Democratic nominee, Stark won the governorship by a majority of over 250,000 votes.<sup>22</sup>

Stark's opponent in the Democratic primary was William Hirth,

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20. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1939-1940, p. 11.

21. Kansas City Star, October 16, 1935, p. 1.

22. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1939-1940, p. 11.

publisher of the Missouri Farmer. Hirth later stated that he expected Stark would "go along" with the machine, that is, that Stark would permit the Pendergast organization to dictate his chief appointees and to have a controlling voice in important State policies.<sup>23</sup>

After Stark defeated Hirth in the primary and went on to victory in the general election, it looked as if Pendergast was in complete control of the Executive Mansion in Missouri. However, this impression was misleading.

In 1937, Governor Stark backed two pieces of legislation which had a direct effect on the political situation in Kansas City. One was a measure designed to provide for permanent registration of voters and for holding of elections in all cities of 600,000 or more inhabitants,<sup>24</sup> and the other a bill providing for registration of voters and holding of elections in all cities of 300,000 to 700,000 inhabitants.<sup>25</sup> These two measures also provided for the establishment of a four-member bi-partisan election board. The selection was to be determined by the number of votes that each party polled at the last general election for Governor. The party with the highest total of votes was to have two representatives on the board and the party with the next highest total of votes was to have the remaining two positions.

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23. William Hirth, The Missouri Farmer, (campaign literature located at the Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri, 1937).

24. Missouri, Laws of Missouri, H. B. 234. 59th General Assembly, (1937), p. 235.

25. Ibid., p. 295.

The Governor was to appoint the individuals for terms of four years. The two bills became law on June 30, 1937.<sup>26</sup>

The first instance of difference between the Governor and the Kansas City "Boss" developed at a conference which took place in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in the Summer of 1937. Pendergast requested the reappointment of Fred Bellemere and George V. Aylward as the two Democrats on the Kansas City election board. Stark turned down Pendergast's request by claiming he desired to handle this matter personally.<sup>27</sup>

Also at the meeting, Pendergast desired the reappointment of R. Emmett O'Malley to the position of Superintendent of Insurance. Stark compromised on this issue and stated he would retain O'Malley for one year with the understanding that Pendergast would submit the names of three individuals who could be considered as a replacement for O'Malley. Disregarding the agreement, Stark summarily removed O'Malley and appointed George A. S. Robertson in his place, in October 1937.<sup>28</sup>

The real break between Stark and Pendergast came about when on October 22, 1937, Stark appointed men to the election board who were not favorable to Pendergast. The election board appointees were J. E. Woodmansee, Democrat, as chairman, Edward Shook as associate Democratic member, and Bruce Forester and Lewis Ellis as Republican members. Pendergast said that Stark

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26. Ibid.

27. Kansas City Star, April 1, 1938, p. 1.

28. Ibid.

named "one Democrat and three Republicans to the bi-partisan board." Pendergast considered Woodmansee an able Democrat.<sup>29</sup>

This election board proceeded to employ application forms in registering voters instead of compiling the new list from the old registration books. This new system enabled the board to check the names of the voters registered. After the municipal election of March 29, 1938, the election board claimed a clean election had been held in Kansas City and they estimated that 60,000 to 70,000 "ghost" votes had been purged from the voting lists.<sup>30</sup>

It was after this election that Pendergast publicly denounced Stark in an interview with reporters. He went on to admit that it was the Governor's duty to appoint the election commissioners, but he claimed that it should have been bi-partisan. "I re-assert with all my vigor I have in my heart that he did not do it."<sup>31</sup> Pendergast claimed that during the recent municipal election in Kansas City, Stark permitted his name to be linked with the enemies of the Democratic Party and never attempted to deny it. "Now after the election is over he says he is always glad when the Democratic party is successful."<sup>32</sup> Pendergast doubted the sincerity of the Governor by stating:

I cannot subscribe to the honesty of that statement, and will have to take it with a grain of salt. In conclusion, let me say that he will have to live with his con-

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29. Kansas City Times, March 30, 1938, p. 1.

30. Ibid.

31. Kansas City Star, April 1, 1938, p. 1.

32. Ibid.



science the same as the rest of us. If his conscience is clear--I know mine is. I now say let the river take its course.<sup>33</sup>

Thus Pendergast cut Stark off from the organization and paved the way for open warfare with the Governor. The first battle in this struggle between the Kansas City organization and Stark took place over the election of a Judge to the State Supreme Court in 1933. Judge James M. Douglas was an appointee of Governor Stark to fill an unexpired term on the State Supreme Court.<sup>34</sup> He filed for election to the court and was backed wholeheartedly by Stark. The Pendergast organization threw its support behind James V. Billings. The primary campaign was vigorously fought with James M. Douglas emerging victorious. Billings polled 312,746 votes to Douglas's 432,244.<sup>35</sup> This election was a damaging blow to the Pendergast organization and it was evident that Stark registered an important victory over his rival.

The coup de grace of Stark's attack on the Pendergast organization came about when Stark, on March 23, 1939, before a joint session of the Missouri General Assembly, requested that the legislature create a board of Police Commissioners for Kansas City to be appointed by the Governor. The legislature was designed to remove local control of the Police Department and place it in the hands of the State Executive. In his speech Stark claimed:

A police department controlled by machine politicians entirely and therefore answerable only to such a political

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33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1939-1940,  
p. 348.

machine quickly becomes a vicious and intolerable thing. The police department of Kansas City has become a signal and notorious failure. As a police department it has virtually ceased to function. It has become the instrumentality of politicians who prostitute it to achieve their own political aims.<sup>36</sup>

The bill proposing the creation of a board of police commissioners in cities of 200,000 to 500,000 inhabitants, with the Governor having the authority to appoint four members for four-year terms, was passed by the legislature and was signed by the Governor on July 8, 1939.<sup>37</sup>

#### Maurice Morton Milligan

Maurice Morton Milligan was born on a farm in Ray County, Missouri, on November 23, 1884. As a youth in the Richmond, Missouri, school system he was permitted to recess his school work so that he might serve as clerk in the State Senate. In this position he early encountered the rules and regulations of the game of politics. During his high school days in Richmond he began studying law and as a result was admitted to the bar the day after graduation from high school. This fact did not prevent Milligan from continuing on to Law School at the University of Missouri from which he graduated in 1908.<sup>38</sup>

After graduating from law school, Milligan returned to

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36. Missouri, Journal of the House of Representatives, 60th General Assembly, (1939), p. 616.

37. Missouri, Laws of Missouri, H.B. 668. 60th General Assembly, (1939), p. 545.

38. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, pp. 4-7.



practice law in Richmond, Missouri. He immediately entered politics and was elected city attorney. In 1915 he was elected Judge of the Probate Court and served in this capacity until 1923.<sup>39</sup>

On February 3, 1934, Milligan was appointed United States District Attorney for the Western District of Missouri by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was from this position that Maurice M. Milligan catapulted himself into a prominent position in Missouri politics.<sup>40</sup>

Early in his career in Kansas City, Milligan became involved in the case known as the "Union Station Massacre." On June 17, 1933, a captured ex-convict, Frank "Jelly" Nash was being escorted by three law enforcement agents into the Union Station at Kansas City. They were met by other law officers and this entire group proceeded to the station parking lot. The prisoner and his escorts were stopped by three armed men who began firing on the police officials. The result of the firing was the death of five men: Chief of Police Otto Reed of McAlester, Oklahoma, police officers W. J. Grooms and Frank Hermanson of Kansas City, Special Agent Raymond J. Caffery of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and ironically enough the ex-convict Frank "Jelly" Nash. Nash was the individual the three armed men were attempting to free from police custody.<sup>41</sup>

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39. Ibid., p. 8.

40. Ibid., p. 3.

41. Ibid., pp. 111-112.

The three armed men involved in this mass murder were Verne Miller, "Pretty Boy" Floyd, and Adam Richetti, all notorious criminals. Miller and Floyd met with violent deaths, and Richetti, after his capture in Ohio, was returned to Kansas City where he was tried and convicted for his participation in the "Massacre" and eventually put to death. Milligan's office played an integral part in the investigation and eventual solution of the mystery which surrounded the "Union Station Massacre". This was Milligan's first involvement with the many spectacular court cases which, in his capacity as District Attorney, he encountered in Kansas City.<sup>42</sup>

Milligan played a central role in the many vote fraud cases which ended in the conviction of 259 persons out of a total of 278 defendants. He reached the pinnacle of his career in the insurance rate case which led to the eventual imprisonment of T. J. Pendergast. Thus in his role of District Attorney, Milligan performed his duties in such a manner that he became a nationally known "gang buster" and a man to be reckoned with in State politics.

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42. Ibid., pp. 118-133.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CAMPAIGN

The incumbent Senator, Harry S. Truman was faced with serious opposition in the Democratic primary race. Lloyd C. Stark waged a successful campaign to clean out the forces of Pendergastism in Kansas City while Maurice M. Milligan had the singular accomplishment of bringing about the actual confinement of T. J. Pendergast. Truman had to make profitable use of his political expertness in the primary campaign in order to overcome the obstacles laid in the way of renomination.

Early in 1940 Harry S. Truman decided to fight for the renomination in the August primary and for re-election in the November general election. He based his decision on what he called specific reasoning:

I had worked hard. I had worked very hard. I felt that I had made a good record in the Senate, and I believe that I had won the respect of that body. I had been attacked and vilified by the metropolitan press in the state of Missouri, and this put me in a fighting mood.<sup>1</sup>

He had been offered a position on the Interstate Commerce Commission by President Roosevelt, but he declined the offer and decided to make a fight for vindication and re-election to the Senate.<sup>2</sup>

A meeting was held in St. Louis early in 1940 among Truman's staunchest supporters to discuss the Senator's chances of winning renomination. Of the twenty-five to thirty individuals

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1. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions, I, p. 159.

2. Ibid.

summoned to meet for this occasion, less than half of them made an appearance.<sup>3</sup> The general feeling of the meeting was summed up in the words of Roger Sermon, a long-time friend of Truman and Mayor of Independence, Missouri.

Harry, I don't think you can win, and that's not merely my personal opinion but after inquiry around. . .<sup>4</sup> if you do run, I'll be for you come hell or high water.

Truman himself claimed that his friends at this meeting were unanimous in advising him not to run. It was felt that the political situation was not conducive for a Truman victory due to the Pendergast issue and the united opposition of the metropolitan newspapers. Truman believed that his New Deal voting record in the Senate was a principal factor for the overt opposition of the press.<sup>5</sup>

With all of this evident discouragement, there was one individual who was hopeful of winning renomination for Truman and that was Victor Messall, Truman's secretary. Messall decided to call upon Jim Pendergast in order to obtain the latter's impression of Truman's chances of victory.<sup>6</sup> Messall visited Jim Pendergast, who was now the leader of the shaken Kansas City organization, and asked him if he would support him if he sought renomination. Pendergast replied, "You can tell Harry Truman that if he gets only two votes in the primary one of them will

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3. Helm, Harry Truman, p. 124.

4. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 198.

5. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions, I, p. 159.

6. Helm, Harry Truman, p. 125.

be mine and the other will be my wife's."<sup>7</sup> With this encouragement from Fendergast, Messall called Washington and told Truman that he was going to file the Senator's notice of intent to run.<sup>8</sup> Truman consented to this action and on February 3, 1940, Truman was officially entered in the race for the Democratic senatorial nomination.<sup>9</sup>

In the campaign Truman had to depend on certain segments of the voting electorate to provide a prime base of strength. Among these groups were the Negroes, organized labor, especially the Railway Unions, and the farmers.

In 1940 Missouri had a total of 244,386 Negroes heavily concentrated in the cities of St. Louis and Kansas City.<sup>10</sup> In the campaign literature issued by the Negro Citizens Committee for the Renomination and Election of Harry S. Truman for United States Senator, a partial list of prominent Negroes was cited; this list of seventeen individuals included thirteen residents of either St. Louis or Kansas City.<sup>11</sup> In a speech given in Sedalia, Missouri, on June 15, 1940, Truman indicated the approach he would take regarding minority groups, "I believe in the brotherhood of man: not merely the brotherhood of white men,

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7. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Daniels, The Man of Independence*, p. 199.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

11. Harry S. Truman, "Negro Citizens Committee for the Renomination and Election of Harry S. Truman", (Campaign literature located at the Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri, 1940).

but the brotherhood of all men before the law."<sup>12</sup>

The Railway Brotherhoods rallied to the support of Truman. Truman had become familiar with the problems involved in the railway industry as a member of the Interstate Commerce Committee, and labor felt it had a friend in the Missouri Senator. The Railway Unions, through their newspaper, Labor, blanketed Missouri with between 500,000 and 750,000 copies of a special edition ten days prior to the primary election.<sup>13</sup> This edition was headlined "Harry Truman's Magnificent Record Entitles Him to Another Term" and the entire issue was devoted to the Senator and his record in the Senate. It was freely sprinkled with testimonials from colleagues in the Senate. On the front page three stalwart New Deal Senators, Senator Alben K. Barkley of Kentucky, majority leader of the Senate, Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York and Senator James F. Brynes of South Carolina came out in support of Truman.<sup>14</sup> This special edition of Labor was indeed a needed and welcomed boon to the Truman campaign, for it provided an opportunity for a last minute statewide appeal to the voters to back Truman without cost to the Truman campaign finance committee.

Truman in his bid to win the farm vote hit hard at the concept of "absentee ownership".

I do not wish to see the farmers absorbed by the big land-holders, to the detriment of the best farming interests.

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12. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 16, 1940, p. 4c.

13. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 204.

14. Labor, July 30, 1940, p. 1.



The tenant farmer should be encouraged, through a liberal system of credit to buy his own land. With pardonable pride, I say that my every effort has been in this direction.<sup>15</sup>

He believed that the farmer would remember his voting record in support of the New Deal legislation designed to aid the farmer.

Truman was not very confident of obtaining large votes in the cities. He had the support of Jim Pendergast, but his organization, with the downfall of T. J. Pendergast, was still an unknown quantity. The metropolitan press, except for the Kansas City Journal, was opposed to his renomination, and they would carry their message to every resident of the large cities.<sup>16</sup>

In St. Louis a political organization was emerging to fill the political power vacuum left by the departure of "Boss" Pendergast. This organization was headed by Mayor Bernard P. Dickman of St. Louis, and Robert Hannegan, chairman of the St. Louis City Democratic organization. Truman early in the campaign felt that this organization was wholeheartedly behind the nomination of Stark.<sup>17</sup> This new organization was intent on securing the gubernatorial nomination for Lawrence McDaniel, former Excise Commissioner in the City of St. Louis, and Dickmann claimed that he did not want his organization involved in the Senate race.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore as Truman embarked on his campaign for the renomination to the United States Senate the prospects were anything

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15. Ibid., p. 3.

16. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions, I, p. 161.

17. Ibid., p. 160.

18. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 31, 1940, p. 3A.

but encouraging.

According to the Missouri Constitution a Governor cannot succeed himself and because of this fact Lloyd G. Stark either had to run for the Senate or accept an appointment from the President to stay in public life. The only other alternative open to the Governor was to return to the family enterprise. Stark decided to enter the Democratic primary race for the senatorial nomination.

Truman claimed that Stark visited him in Washington late in 1939 and told him that he did not intend to run for the Senate in 1940; but he then believed that Stark would be his prime opponent in the primary.<sup>19</sup> This belief was borne out, when on January 22, 1940, Stark filed his formal declaration of candidacy for the Democratic nomination for U. S. Senator, and made the following statement:

It is my intention to conduct a campaign that will lead to the success of the Democratic party in the November elections.

I am a firm believer in the policies of the national Democratic administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

I desire to serve Missouri as United States Senator and pledge myself to fight for the continuance of President Roosevelt's efforts for the general welfare of the people.

I have said, and now reiterate, that I am going to make the strongest possible campaign for the nomination, but I am not planning an attack upon any other Democrat in order to win the nomination.

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19. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions, I, p. 160.

My entire campaign will be based upon my record as Governor of Missouri. I will stand on that.<sup>20</sup>

In this statement Stark laid down the general outlines of the type of campaign he hoped to wage.

In his capacity as chief executive of Missouri, Stark had established a well-organized net of state employees who reported back to the Governor's office information which they felt would be of benefit to his campaign. A memorandum pertaining to the method of securing this information was circulated to all department heads in the State administration, encouraging them to solicit aid from their employees in this program of campaign intelligence.<sup>21</sup>

Stark tied the hands of the state employees solely to his campaign: "I am taking no side in any races. . . . They can be for any candidates they desire, but they must not get out and take sides aggressively in any other campaign."<sup>22</sup> Thus the state employees were expected to either sink or swim with the outcome of the August 6th primary. Those who bolted Stark and decided to take out on their own, took the risk of being cited in the "black list" file.

The "black list" was a card file of those who were enjoying some benefit from his governorship and suspected of disloyalty to Stark; they were struck from the Governor's favor. In the

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20. Newsrelease distributed to the press, January 21, 1940. Located in the Lloyd C. Stark papers (Western Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri) cited hereafter as Stark papers.

21. Stark papers, June 12, 1940.

22. Kansas City Star, July 4, 1940, p. 4.

State Supreme Court election battle between Douglas and Billings in 1938, the Governor's "black list" contained some three hundred and fifty cards on which were written unfavorable comments the Governor had received concerning state employees.<sup>23</sup>

An example of a report on a State employee suspected of political activities hostile to Stark's interest was a letter from a Leon Adams to the Governor. At the top of this letter was a penciled-in notation "black list,"

Because Mr. J. Sherrod, County Recorder, is your appointment we thought it advisable to write you regarding the fact that among the first people employed by the Recorder was Mr. Shelton Stone, 100 West Armour, who has for years been a Fendergast worker, worked for them in last election and primary against Judge Douglas, was a clerk in the 20th precinct 5th ward for them last election. Why he does not have a position with them, is any ones guess.

There are so many real citizens here, responsible, efficient, willing, and needing work. We do not think it fair for one of that machine should take the place of people who endured and fought that machine since its beginning, and not a chance to get any position in the county or city unless one belonged. We have intended writing you for some time, thought that no matter was too small to be overlooked if this beastly machine is ever cleaned out of here. I am writing for a group.<sup>24</sup>

While this practice of rewards and punishments is not strange to politics, it demands a loyalty based essentially on fear instead of any sincere regard for the individual who demands the loyalty. This type of forced "loyalty" can fester and work to the disadvantage of those who control an organization based upon it.

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23. George E. Slavens, "Stark as a Political Reformer, 1936-1941" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Missouri, 1957) p. 92.

24. Leon Adams to Lloyd C. Stark, November 4, 1939, Stark papers.

Stark did not advance his cause among the regular Democratic party machinery in the state when, in an attempt to prevent the political use of the W. P. A., in the 1940 primary, he had Colonel B. Marvin Casteel, W. P. A. administrator for Missouri, issue an order restraining his supervisors from holding political party office. The outcome of this order was the demand that twenty-six of his supervisors either resign or give up their posts as county committee chairmen.<sup>25</sup>

Even with a certain degree of highhandedness on his part in forming a loyal organization, Stark possessed an enviable record of accomplishments as an opponent of political corruption. He had an unparalleled record of success with his attack on the corruption of the ballot in Kansas City, and with his drive to have the legislature create a new election board in that city, he restored a degree of "sanctity" to the ballot. He also performed a herculean task in having the Kansas City police department removed from local control. With this record of political reform Stark would be a formidable candidate in any political race he entered.

The third man in this three cornered race for the Democratic senatorial nomination was Maurice M. Milligan. He presented a peculiar case. Before the meeting held in St. Louis to plumb the prospects of Truman winning renomination, Milligan contacted Roger Sermon and asked for his support. Sermon stated that he would be for Truman if he ran, but in the eventuality that he

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25. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, January 12, 1940, p. 34.



stayed out of the race, he would support Milligan.<sup>26</sup> Milligan came into the race, according to his account, when he believed that Truman would not seek re-election. It was Milligan's understanding that Truman would be offered an appointment by the President and therefore was encouraged to enter the campaign against Stark.<sup>27</sup>

It was also believed that the shaken Pendergast organization would favor Milligan, the prosecutor, over Stark, the "ingrate", if a contest developed between these two men.<sup>28</sup> A letter sent to Stark dated October 23, 1939, by a William C. McReynolds tells of a discussion McReynolds had with a Kansas City Star reporter.

I was talking with a Star reporter Saturday afternoon, and this reporter tells me that the higher-ups in the Pendergast organization are trying to induce Truman not to run for re-election and are endeavoring to get Maurice Milligan to run.<sup>29</sup>

While indeed this is a paradoxical situation, Governor Stark informed his campaign chief in St. Louis, Judge Jesse McDonald, that it was his intent to tie Milligan to the Pendergast organization.

In other words, from now on out, I probably will spend a considerable portion of each speech reminding the people that Senator Truman is the Pendergast candidate, followed with a good strong attack on the Pendergast machine and only a brief reminder that the other candidate, Maurice M. Milligan, (whose name I probably will not use) is also backed with elements of the Pendergast machine.<sup>30</sup>

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26. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 199.

27. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, pp. 231-232.

28. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 199.

29. William C. McReynolds to Lloyd C. Stark, October 23, 1939, Stark papers.

30. Jesse McDonald to Lloyd C. Stark, July 22, 1939, Stark papers.



The determination of Milligan to enter the race and the charges that he had elements of the Pendergast organization backing his candidacy did not prevent him from keying his campaign to the issue of Pendergastism:

Pendergastism is an issue in this campaign because the Pendergast machine of Kansas City is attempting to stage a comeback through the candidacy of Senator Truman and regain the power it lost when it was cracked by the long arm of the Federal government.<sup>31</sup>

His campaign literature bristled with his successful attack on the Pendergast machine. It outlined in chronological order his work in the vote fraud cases and his ultimate victory in securing the imprisonment of T. J. Pendergast. Milligan denied any allegation that he was aligned with the Pendergast organization and disclaimed any connection with "Court House Rings":

Already in this early stage of the campaign Governor Stark has issued a statement charging that Pendergast and his Kansas City machine, its new allies, and the Court House rings are opposing him in his race. I do not know who he means by "new allies" and "Court House Rings" for the Governor refused to say; but so that the record may be kept straight I want to emphasize to the people of Missouri what they already know, that I am not a new ally of Pendergast or his Kansas City machine nor am I an old ally of Pendergast or his machine. Never during my life have I ever trod the political pathway to 1908 Main Street with my hat in hand; nor have I ever asked or received any favor or support from Pendergast or his machine. Neither of my opponents can make this frank statement for everyone knows they both have been allies of Pendergast and his machine. Senator Truman is indebted to Pendergast for every political office he has ever held. In 1932 Governor Stark on two occasions unsuccessfully sought the support of Pendergast for Governor and again in 1936 he sought and obtained the endorsement and support of Pendergast and his machine which insured his nomination and election as Governor. They were in the same boat. Truman refused

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31. Kansas City Star, July 7, 1940, p. 24.

to desert the ship even when it was sinking but the Governor went over-board when the first torpedo struck it.<sup>32</sup>

As the campaign moved into the last two months before the August 6th primary date, the strategy that each candidate would employ in his bid for the nomination was becoming more evident. Truman planned to concentrate all of his efforts in presenting his Senate record to the people and did not expect to indulge in personalities.<sup>33</sup> It was evident that Truman's past connection did not favor his use of personal attacks on his opponents. Truman believed that if he ignored Stark during the campaign this would incense the Governor and lead him into making rash statements which would aid the Truman campaign.<sup>34</sup> In order to get his Senate record to the people, Truman was helped generously by his colleagues in the Senate who gave freely of their time to bolster the campaign of the junior Senator of Missouri.

Milligan on the other hand was content to ride to victory on a program of anti-Fendergastism. A speech at Poplar Bluff, Missouri, in which Milligan charged that T. J. Fendergast was back in the game of politics and in fact was the force engineering Truman's campaign, brought a speedy reaction from the Judge who sentenced Fendergast to prison. Federal Judge Merrill E. Otis

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32. Maurice M. Milligan, "Democrats Will Win Again With Milligan" (campaign literature located at the Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri, 1940).

33. Harry S. Truman, "Letter to Supporters" (campaign literature located at the Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri, 1940).

34. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 205.

immediately wrote to the probation officer, Mr. Grout:

I am sure you must have read in this morning edition of the Kansas City Times the Associated Press dispatch from Poplar Bluff, Mo., dated July 9, in which it is intimated that T. J. Pendergast has violated the terms of his parole.

You are directed to investigate this intimation at once and to report to me in writing, within ten days, whether the intimation has or has not any base of fact.

If your investigation requires it, and you advise me, the grand jury will be directed to give you every possible assistance.<sup>35</sup>

On July 17th in a reply to the letter of Judge Otis, Grout informed the Judge that the allegation of Milligan did not have basis of fact:

Reference is made to your letter of July 10, 1940, calling the attention of this office to an article which appeared in the press to the effect that Thomas J. Pendergast has violated the terms of probation in that he has participated, directly or indirectly in political activities since his period of probation began, and particularly that he has, through his nephew, Jimmy Pendergast, directed the political campaign of Harry Truman, candidate for the Democratic nomination for U. S. Senator.

This is to advise that I have made careful inquiry and investigation of all information brought to the attention of this office, and have also investigated rumors and intimation and have made inquiry of persons who might be in a position to have knowledge of any such political activities, and I have been unable to discover any evidence competent in any court to approve that Mr. Pendergast has either directly or indirectly taken part in any political activities.

In the future this office will continue to make investigations of any reports or information received, to be certain that all conditions of probation imposed in this case shall be complied with strictly and faithfully.<sup>36</sup>

These two letters clearly indicate the tone which the Milligan

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35. Kansas City Star, July 10, 1940, p. 1.

36. Kansas City Star, July 18, 1940, p. 1.

campaign would follow; he had made a successful career out of prosecuting the Pendergast forces and now he desired to be nominated on an anti-Pendergast platform.

Governor Stark in setting up his strategy was involved in a dilemma of sorts; on the issue of Pendergastism he had to share the "glory" of the machine's downfall with Maurice M. Milligan, and on his avowed support of the New Deal he had to compete with the positive record of Truman's support of the Administration's program in the Senate. These two factors would alter the promise he made when he filed for the nomination. At that time, he stated he was not planning an attack upon any other Democrat in order to win the nomination.

The Stark forces were determined to tie Truman to Pendergast and to attack the Kansas City Democratic machine. On the issue of establishing himself as the advocate of clean government, Stark received a setback when Senator Guy Gillette, chairman of the Senate Committee on Campaign Expenditures, released a statement to the press indicating that state employees were forced to give contributions to Stark's campaign:

This campaign of solicitation and direct or indirect co-ercion is being systematically carried on by a representative designated by the Governor through heads of the various state departments. Records of such representatives reveal that on May 31 approximately \$28,000 had been pledged, of which \$11,000 had been collected.<sup>37</sup>

Stark replied to this charge that the report of the Committee was an attempt to "smear" him; he went on to deny that any "Lug" had

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37. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 21, 1940, p. 1.

been placed upon anyone by him or his campaign committee. He said that at all times his instruction had been without pressure.<sup>38</sup>

The month of July was a difficult time for the Governor to campaign actively for the senatorial nomination. Three factors curtailed Stark's campaign activities. He was seriously considered a Vice-Presidential candidate; secondly, the Democratic National Convention was held in Chicago the week of the 15th; thirdly, the Governor had called a special session of the Missouri legislature to appropriate extra money for direct relief.

Stark had been considered a possibility for the Vice-Presidential nomination at a conference on July 23, 1939, held at Hyde Park, New York, between James Farley and President Roosevelt.<sup>39</sup> In fact, William Allen White believed that Stark was the ideal person for the nomination:

Stark is without flaw, spot or blemish. He is a graduate of Annapolis. He is a World War soldier. He is an experienced executive as head of one of America's largest nurseries. He, as Governor, has been a reform Governor who led the fight on the Pendergast machine in K. C. He has all the good points of a first class candidate. His opponents can only point to a report of the discredited Gillette Senate Investigation Committee, which alleges that Stark's friends collected lug for his state campaign from state officials. This charge Stark vigorously and plausibly denies, and the charge has not seriously harmed him. Stark's track strategy is that of a dark horse and his backers are willing to let Douglas get right out in front, occupying the place in this convention that Dewey held in the Republican convention.<sup>40</sup>

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38. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 23, 1940, p. 3C.

39. James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), p. 165.

40. Kansas City Star, July 14, 1940, p. 4A.



With the Democratic national convention to be opened in the middle of July, Stark had little to be pleased with in the Missouri delegation. When the delegates held an organization meeting at the end of June, they repudiated the Governor by not naming him to an important committee, or even giving to him the entirely honorary position of vice-chairman. The Governor, who was a delegate at large was not present at this organizational caucus. To make matters worse, Harry S. Truman was selected by the delegates to be Missouri's delegate to the all important platform committee at the national convention, and Senator Bennett Clark was named chairman of the State delegation.<sup>41</sup>

Earlier in the year at the State Democratic convention which met on April 15th in St. Louis to select the delegates to the national convention, an attempt was proposed to prevent Stark from being named a delegate. Truman stopped this maneuver because he did not want to make a political martyr of Stark.<sup>42</sup>

The third factor which cut into the Governor's valuable time to campaign for the senatorial nomination was the special session of the Missouri legislature. The Governor called the special session "for the purpose of meeting the impending emergency whereunder, in the absence of prompt action, the state would be compelled to discontinue. . . that important phase of

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41. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 29, p. 5c.

42. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 206.



our public assistance program designated as 'direct relief'".<sup>43</sup>

An additional burden which Stark had to contend with was his running feud with Senator Bennett Clark, senior Senator from Missouri. A strained relationship existed between these two men, and according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, this relationship had never satisfactorily been explained. Clark indicated he was moved to rebel against Stark when the latter branched out and began to take in too much territory.

I was under the impression that the constitution limited the Governor's jurisdiction to the State of Missouri. When he began to try and run the country I decided it might be well to put him in his place.<sup>44</sup>

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch offered as an explanation that a measure of jealousy developed between Stark and Senator Clark when two years previously Clark was mentioned as a prospective Democratic Presidential candidate by several eastern magazines and Stark failed to become active in support of Clark's Presidential aspirations.<sup>45</sup> Regardless of the nature of the feud, it was apparent that Clark was going to wage a campaign of invective and ridicule against Stark when he made the accusation that the Governor was a candidate "for President, Vice-President, United States Senator, King of Swat and for a few other things."<sup>46</sup>

As the campaign progressed into July it appeared that Truman was being isolated by his two opponents except for their continued

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43. Missouri, Journal of Missouri Legislature, 60th General Assembly (Extra Session, 1940) p. 5.

44. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 16, 1940, p. 1.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

charge of Pendergastism. Stark and Milligan seemed contented to challenge each others contention that he alone was solely responsible for the downfall of Pendergast. Milligan claimed that the Governor did not become a crusader until the Pendergast machine was groggy from the continual hammering of the Federal Government, and only then did Stark begin to wave the banner of reform.<sup>47</sup> Stark challenged Milligan to deny that he was being supported by Joseph B. Shannon, Pendergast's former associate.<sup>48</sup>

Stark also showed signs of campaigning against Senator Clark instead of Truman. In reply to a charge by Clark that the Governor's Presidential or Vice-Presidential campaign appeared to be in full swing everywhere except in Missouri, Stark called Senator Clark disloyal:

Senator Clark is obsessed with the idea that he represents the Democracy of Missouri. He does not. He misrepresents that Democracy. The Democrats of Missouri do not support him in his continuous sniping disloyalty to President Roosevelt and the national administration.<sup>49</sup>

This only encouraged more histrionics from Clark, who claimed that Stark was probably the first man in history who ever attempted to run for President or Vice-President by employing methods usually adopted to races for constable.<sup>50</sup>

These exchanges between Senator Clark and Stark and those between the Governor and Milligan were surely helpful to Truman who continued his plan of going to the people with his Senate

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47. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 9, 1940, p. 5c.

48. Kansas City Star, July 21, 1940, p. 5c.

49. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 11, 1940, p. 12A.

50. Ibid.

record.

The Democratic national convention of 1940 was clearly a political debacle as far as Governor Stark was concerned. Stark continually denied that he was a candidate for any other office except United States Senator: "I am not going to be a candidate for any place on the national ticket, and I hope my friends will not present my name to the convention."<sup>51</sup> Just four days after he made this statement, Stark opened headquarters in Chicago in order to seek the Vice-Presidential nomination. Robert George of Lebo, Kansas, was designated as Stark's floor manager at the convention.<sup>52</sup> Shortly after the opening of his headquarters, Stark stated, "I am going to let nature take its course. I am not a candidate, but I am not going to hold the boys back any longer."<sup>53</sup>

With this announcement, Stark was openly in the struggle for the Vice-Presidential nomination. His forces in Chicago were very optimistic. Robert George, his floor leader, claimed;

The Governor will have about 200 votes on the first ballot, chiefly because we are not asking anyone to ignore an obligation to a favorite son. On the second ballot we can count on at least 400 votes, and we'll nominate on the third.<sup>54</sup>

This enthusiastic estimate of Robert George did not coincide with the opinion of Senator Clark, who said, "I don't think he (Stark) has four and one-half votes in the Missouri delegation

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51. Kansas City Star, July 11, 1940, p. 1.

52. Kansas City Star, July 15, 1940, p. 1.

53. Kansas City Star, July 16, 1940, p. 1.

54. Ibid.

including his own."<sup>55</sup>

The Vice-Presidential aspirations of Governor Stark were extinguished when Henry Wallace's name was placed in nomination. When it became clear that Wallace was favored by Roosevelt, Stark issued the following statement:

It has been my contention and the contention of my supporters that a Midwesterner should be nominated for Vice-President.

My friends had planned to place my name in nomination, but we are all anxious to make the nomination for Vice-President harmonious, and I think that my friend Secretary Wallace has great strength and the support of the farmers.

He will make an ideal candidate for the Vice-President and I am happy to withdraw in his favor.<sup>56</sup>

The attempt to obtain the Vice-Presidential nomination was indeed a calculated gamble by the Governor. The outcome of the gamble aided both Stark's opponents, because in his quest for national office he had become idle in the State race and showed questionable sincerity in seeking the Senate seat of Harry S. Truman. Stark was placed in the politically unfortunate position of reaching for two political plums at the same time.

After Stark issued his statement in support of Henry Wallace for Vice-President, Clark continued his attack on the Governor. In the voting of the Vice-Presidential nomination Stark supported Wallace, but Clark, who controlled the State delegation, persuaded the delegates to back Senator William E. Bankhead. As a result Governor Stark was again handed a set back when the

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55. Ibid.

56. Kansas City Star, July 18, 1940, p. 1.

Missouri delegation voted 28½ for Bankhead and 1½ votes for Wallace.<sup>57</sup>

When Stark returned home from the convention in order to prepare for the special session of the State Legislature, it became difficult to ascertain his strength. He largely was without support from party backers in the counties; he appealed to voters who took virtually no part in the mechanics of politics, but who still cast their ballot.<sup>58</sup>

Since its inception, Stark's campaign had been hindered by the rumors that Stark would accept a position in the President's cabinet. In a telegram that a Stark supporter, Frank L. Duboise sent to the Governor, this condition was mentioned:

Your friends know you would accept any commission that you deemed your patriotic duty. If national service should necessitate your withdrawal from the Senatorial race, please persuade your most capable proponent to file for said office tomorrow, the last day for filing, because we believe you wish to see your principles live on in our state.<sup>59</sup>

Stark immediately sent a reply to Duboise's telegram and stated:

Appreciate your telegram. Absolutely no truth to any rumors that I have been offered Secretary of the Navy or any other post. I deeply appreciate your confidence but I am in the Senate race to stay and I am confident I will be elected.<sup>60</sup>

The rumors persisted and on July 27, 1940, Stark charged that Clark inspired this false gossip and insisted that he would

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57. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 19, 1940, p. 6A.

58. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 28, 1940, p. 3B.

59. Telegram of Frank L. Duboise to Lloyd C. Stark, June 7, 1940, Stark papers.

60. Telegram of Lloyd C. Stark to Frank L. Duboise, June 7, 1940, Stark papers.

not even consider an appointment to the President's Cabinet.<sup>61</sup>

Stark had a friendly relationship with the Administration, and Truman believed that Stark was supported by Roosevelt for the nomination.<sup>62</sup> Stark visited the White House often and it appeared Roosevelt was pleased by his attempt to wrest the nomination from Truman.

This belief that the Roosevelt Administration was covertly supporting Stark seems valid when we note a citation in the Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior:

Senator Truman telephoned me yesterday to ask whether I would pass the word down the line to any Missouri people in Interior to vote for him for Senator. I told him that one had to be very careful because we were not supposed to take sides when there was a contest, and there distinctly is a contest in Missouri. My information is that Governor Stark is in the lead and personally I favor Governor Stark, although Truman has made a good New Deal Senator.<sup>63</sup>

When we couple this reference with the telegram that the White House sent to R.K. Wodlow, Chairman of Truman's Labor Reception Committee, in response to a request by that individual that Roosevelt endorse Truman we notice a decided coolness towards Truman:

The President asks me to explain to you personally that while Senator Truman is an old and trusted friend of the President his invariable practice has been not to take part in primary contests. This is because in contests of this

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61. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 27, 1940, p. 3A.

62. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions, I p. 159.

63. Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The Lowering Clouds, 1939-1941 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953) III, pp. 205-206.



character among members of his own party the President must stand aloof regardless of any personal preference he might have.<sup>64</sup>

This is a decided turn about since Roosevelt did actively participate in the Democratic primaries of 1938. It was true that in 1938 Roosevelt did "burn his hands" with his attempted "purge", but there was an inherent difference between the 1938 situation and Mr. Wodlow's request for Presidential support. In 1938 Roosevelt was attacking Democratic Congressmen who were frustrating the work of the New Deal, while Truman was a staunch advocate of the New Deal and was deserving of some recognition for his efforts in behalf of the Administration.

With the campaign moving into the last week prior to the election, Stark counted Milligan out of the race. He expressed the opinion that everything pointed to the fact that he had only one opponent to beat and that was Senator Harry S. Truman.<sup>65</sup>

If this opinion was correct, Milligan would still be a thorn in the side of the Governor, because both men were appealing to essentially the same voters, those who were opposed to Pendergastism.

As the election was just around the corner the campaign centered in intensity in St. Louis, where the candidates were fighting for support of the regular organization committeemen.<sup>66</sup>

64. Elliot Roosevelt, F.D.R. His Personal Letters, 1928-1945 (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce Inc., 1950) II, p. 1049.

65. Lloyd C. Stark to R. Perry Spencer, July 29, 1940, Stark papers.

66. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 2, 1940, p. 4C.

The St. Louis Democratic committeemen were a tightly knit and disciplined organization. Perhaps the major reason for this fact can be found in the philosophy of George B. Tracy, chairman of the St. Louis Efficiency Board, and an appointee of Mayor Bernard F. Dickmann:

City employees who double-crossed the organization would be discharged. If anyone pretends to be a member of our organization it's his duty to support the organization. If he can't support us, he should resign from the city service. Then he can support anyone he wants and we'll remain friends.<sup>67</sup> No one is compelled to be a member of our organization.

This classic statement in regard to personnel relationships came from a man who was chief of the Mayor's Civil Service Committee set up to establish a true merit system. It also gave an indication of the nature of the St. Louis organization, determined to elect a Governor.

The Mayor maintained that the race for the Democratic senatorial nomination was wide-open in St. Louis. He sent telegrams to the chairmen of the McDaniel for Governor committees in ten out-state congressional districts, notifying them that the City organization which was backing McDaniel, was not throwing its organized support to any of the three candidates for the Democratic nomination for the United States Senator.<sup>68</sup>

Stark seemed confident that the St. Louis organization would not move away from the position of neutrality in the senatorial race.

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67. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 7, 1940, p. 3A.

68. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 31, 1940, p. 3A.

A letter sent to Stark by a C. L. Shotwell mentioned a "deal" between the Truman and McDaniel forces:

I am reliably informed that the friends of Senator Truman in Western Missouri are trying to make a deal with the St. Louis City Administration whereby the friends of Truman will support McDaniel in return for the administration's support of Senator Truman. Unless the city administration agrees to this, the friends of Senator Truman threaten to support McReynolds for the gubernatorial nomination.<sup>69</sup>

In his reply to Shotwell just before the election, the Governor indicated no alarm concerning a proposed "deal": "I am of the opinion that there has not been and will not be a deal made between those forces you mention. I feel very confident of carrying both Kansas City and St. Louis."<sup>70</sup>

On August 1, 1940, Robert E. Hannegan, chairman of the Democratic City Committee, informed the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that an informal poll of committee members, indicated that about 10 of the cities 28 wards would support Governor Lloyd C. Stark for United States Senator, 10 were pledged to Senator Harry S. Truman and two would back Maurice Milligan. The remaining six wards were still undetermined.<sup>71</sup>

A Mr. Conran, chairman of Truman's Speaker Committee, described his participation in a maneuver such as the one described Shotwell's letter to Governor Stark:

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69. C. L. Shotwell to Lloyd C. Stark, July 11, 1940, Stark papers.

70. Lloyd C. Stark to C. L. Shotwell, July 29, 1940, Stark papers.

71. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 1, 1940, p. 4A.

I finally contacted James Waschter, who had been helping us get our position over to Hannegan, within a few days of election day, and told him we couldn't wait any longer. If Hannegan was going with Stark we were ready to start our campaign against McDaniel. Hannegan telephoned me later that day and said he was going for Truman and would slate him in his ward. He followed this with an announcement in the papers a day or so before the election. We were later informed that he and Dickmann had a conference and decided something had to be done. They argued that Hannegan would make his move for Truman and Dickmann would stay with Stark-- which is exactly what they did.<sup>72</sup>

Politically the decision made at the conference was a wise move, for in a close election, and surely this was such an election, when the outcome was doubtful, the St. Louis organization could do nothing but gain by splitting its support between the two top candidates.

This was the decisive move, at least in Truman's view: "The biggest break was when Bob Hannegan, who had been working for Stark, sensed that he was backing the wrong man and switched his support to me."<sup>73</sup>

Milligan continued his campaign of invective against Stark up to the closing days of the campaign. He called Stark a "swashbuckling war-monger and a pompous military inclined candidate."<sup>74</sup> Stark, on the other hand, concentrated his attack on Truman, whom he called a "Pendergast stooge", and called for the people to vote for him in order to make certain that the war on Pendergastism would be successful.<sup>75</sup>

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72. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 209.

73. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions, I, p. 16.

74. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 3, 1940, p. 3A.

75. Ibid.

Three days before the election the situation was still not clear in the St. Louis area. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that a swing from Truman to Stark was taking place headed by the Dickmann forces in an effort to help Lawrence McDaniel win the gubernatorial nomination. It was claimed that the Governor was being slated in many wards in order to take the onus of machine off McDaniel.<sup>76</sup>

As the campaign ended all of the candidates except Truman declared their confidence in winning the election. Stark claimed that he would win the nomination by a plurality of 150,000 votes, whereas Milligan was more conservative and expected a plurality of only 94,000 votes. The Truman forces said that "hot air" numerical estimates would be omitted.<sup>77</sup>

On August 6, 1940, the Democrats of Missouri went to the polls to nominate one of three men to represent the party as the Democratic senatorial nominee at the general election. After the polls closed and the votes were tabulated, Harry S. Truman won renomination by a scant 7,976 votes over his nearest rival Lloyd C. Stark who polled a total of 260,581 votes. Maurice M. Milligan, the other candidate in the race for the Senatorial nomination, obtained 127,363 votes. Truman emerged the victor in this exceedingly close election by receiving a total vote of 268,557 votes.<sup>78</sup>

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76. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 4, 1940, p. 3A.

77. Ibid.

78. Missouri, Official Manual State of Missouri, 1941-1942, p. 367.

Stark claimed after the election that he lost the race because the two machines in the large urban areas supported Truman while he obtained more support from the outstate counties than both of his opponents combined.<sup>79</sup>

This statement at face value is correct but as Figure 1 in the appendix indicates Truman held his own in the outstate regions and carried both of the large urban areas, Kansas City and St. Louis City.

Figure 2 shows that Milligan ran far behind Truman in the majority of the State's 114 counties, but that his strength was enough to deter any major outstate sweep by the Stark forces.

Truman won the race by a bare margin of 7,976 votes over his closest rival Governor Stark. The crux of Truman's success can be better understood when we quote from a letter Stark sent to R. Harrison Field on November 21, 1939, before the campaign ever began: "I am not a professional politician as you know. My training and background has been in the field of business and agriculture rather than politics."<sup>80</sup>

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79. Lloyd C. Stark to Stuart S. Goode, August 20, 1940, Stark papers.

80. Lloyd C. Stark to R. Harrison Field, November 21, 1939, Stark papers.



## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION

When Harry S. Truman entered the campaign he possessed certain decided disadvantages. He was a Pendergast man and Pendergast had been sent to prison. He also had attempted to prevent the reappointment and confirmation of Maurice M. Milligan for a second term as United States District Attorney. This action reemphasized the fact that he had close ties with the Kansas City organization. Furthermore, the large metropolitan newspapers were undertaking a massive attack on urban machine politics.

Lloyd C. Stark, on the other hand, was the proud possessor of an outstanding gubernatorial record. He had destroyed election crookedness in Kansas City; he had appointed an honest Election Board in that city and above all he had removed the control of the Kansas City Police Department from the hands of the local machine.

Maurice M. Milligan, the former United States District Attorney, did not own a record of achievement such as the one compiled by Stark but he did actively participate, and very successfully, in the downfall of Pendergast's Kansas City organization and especially in the eventual confinement of Thomas J. Pendergast.

The records and previous accomplishments of the three candidates involved in the contest for the Democratic senatorial

nomination were not the sole considerations which ultimately decided the outcome of this primary election. Truman was a shrewd politician who understood the forces at work in the campaign. Pendergastism was an issue, this Truman could not deny. It would have been ridiculous for him to disassociate himself from the Kansas City machine. Truman was being accused of guilt by association and he decided not to exert energy in his own defense. Instead he obtained the support of the remnants of the Pendergast organization and began a concerted effort to win over the emerging machine of St. Louis.

In his approach to politics Truman acted as a realist. He outwardly aimed his campaign at the farmer, laborer, and minority groups, a standard procedure in State-wide political campaigns. Inwardly, he attempted to exert pressure on recalcitrant organizational chiefs. Truman had established a reputation for unswerving loyalty to his friends even when they were in serious trouble. Truman subscribed to the same philosophy as Pendergast, namely, that it was the delivery of the votes that counted in political contest.

Stark, on the other hand displayed a lack of political common sense which at times bordered on the ludicrous. His political organization consisted largely of State office holders whom he had tied securely to his own race. If their support was not to wane, he had to wage a vigorous campaign. The state employees were cognizant of the fact that their own future was allied to the Governor's success. It is conceivable that when the Governor's

desire for national office overcame the bounds of sound political judgment, they began to look elsewhere for a political saviour.

Stark's behavior during the campaign in regard to his disastrous quest for the Vice-Presidential nomination created a situation where the Governor's sincerity in seeking the Senate seat of Harry S. Truman could be questioned. The voters were presented with a candidate who behaved in a very erratic manner. First he denied any desire for national office, then he openly sought the Vice-Presidential nomination, and finally he was embarrassed by his own State delegation when that group repudiated the Governor's endorsement of Henry Wallace and threw its support behind Senator William Bankhead.

The Governor lacked political finesse in his treatment of his own State party. The action of the Governor demanding the removal of the W.P.A. from politics resulted in a disenchantment with the Governor by party regulars. His highhanded treatment of members of his own organization and his continual attack on Fendergastism created the image of an individual who would stop at nothing in order to satisfy his own political ambition.

Stark's ambition ran head-on into the thwarted ambition of Senator Bennett Clark. Clark was an anti-New Deal Senator in a sea of New Deal spirit; he had visions of himself as a likely candidate for the Presidential nomination in 1940 if Franklin Delano Roosevelt could be stopped in his bid to overturn the three term tradition. Clark was not pleased to see the Governor advance his career nationally, as it diminished his own chances

to become an important national figure. The Senator commenced an attack of ridicule and invective against Stark in order to curtail the political ambitions of the Governor. Stark choose to answer these attacks and in doing so wasted considerable time which could have been utilized to better advantage if he would have concentrated his energy on unseating Truman.

The Governor's campaign of political reform became tainted when a Senate report on campaign expenditures indicated that the Stark forces were obtaining forced financial contributions from State employees. Since economics plays an important role in any political contest, the Stark campaign forces decided to use this method of contributions. Yet, they were having "a terrible time getting along with their finances."<sup>1</sup>

Special interest groups utilized their financial resources in the campaign in such a manner as to influence the shaping of public policy. Pressure was exerted in order to maintain the status quo in public policy or attempts were made to move off center in either direction. The Railway Union's support of Truman's campaign was an example of this conditions. The Railway Unions issued the invaluable special edition of Labor ten days before the end of the campaign. Organized labor realized that Truman had supported the New Deal legislation which had strengthened labor unions and by use of its economic power was attempting

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1. Jack Stapleton to Henry C. Salveter, July 29, 1940, Stark papers.

to assure the election of one who supported their interests.

After Stark decided to move away from his stated strategy of not attacking members of his own party and began to wage a campaign based on charges of corruption and Pendergastism, he moved directly into conflict with Milligan. Milligan's entire campaign was centered on the issue of Pendergastism.

Milligan's entrance into the race was of real significance because when Truman filed for renomination he had two opponents who had to share the anti-Pendergast votes. This situation was clearly favorable to the Senator and it is not beyond belief that Milligan was induced into the campaign for this specific reason. Whether Milligan was duped into entering the race or not is hard to determine. Milligan's own book, The Missouri Waltz, is definitely bitter toward Truman and the Pendergast organization, but the fact remains that when Milligan sought renomination and confirmation for United States District Attorney for the third time in 1940, Truman did not stand in his way.<sup>2</sup> When we contrast Truman's behavior with his bitter denunciation of Milligan in the 1938 debate over renomination and confirmation we notice a decided shift in Truman's attitude towards Milligan. The United States District Attorney also issued a statement in 1944 indicating that in the investigations undertaken by Milligan's office into the corruption in Kansas City "never once did the finger of suspicion point in the direction of

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2. Daniels, The Man of Independence, p. 212.

Senator Truman."<sup>3</sup> This statement by a political opponent who tried every conceivable maneuver in his own campaign for the Senate nomination to tie Truman to Pendergast is difficult to comprehend, indeed.

Milligan's entrance into the race and Hannegan's eleventh hour shift to Truman were the two key factors which led to Truman's victory. Milligan carried only five counties out of a total one hundred and fourteen counties, but he compiled a total vote of 127,363. This was accomplished by a candidate who made Pendergastism his sole issue in the campaign, and when we note that Stark lost the election by a total of only 7,976 votes we readily notice the significance of Milligan's entrance into the race. If 3,989 voters switched their votes from Truman to Stark the Governor would have won the Senatorial nomination.

The St. Louis City Democratic Committee Chairman's shift was of real importance because Truman carried the City by a vote margin of 8,411 over Stark and this figure almost coincides with the vote margin by which Truman won the election. Hannegan's move toward Truman paid off handsomely because thereafter the St. Louis politician's own star began to rise. He successively obtained the following positions: United States Collector of Internal Revenue for the Eastern District of Missouri, Commissioner of Internal Revenue in Washington, D.C., Democratic National Chairman, and Postmaster General in Harry S. Truman's cabinet.

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3. Milligan, Missouri Waltz, p. 217.



When we couple the two key factors, Milligan's entrance into the race and Hannegan's shift to Truman, with the series of political blunders which Stark committed in his attempt to satisfy his own political ambitions, we become aware of a degree of political astuteness on the part of Truman which was not to be found in the makeup of his major adversary.

Truman was primarily a political realist and he was cognizant of the fact that issues and personal attacks alone do not determine the outcome of elections. The most important thing is to deliver the vote. It was to this end that Truman concentrated his major efforts. It was this thorough understanding of the realities of politics that enabled Harry S. Truman to win the most important struggle for power in his home state of Missouri.

An attempt to assess the prowess of a political actor in a given set of circumstances poses obvious difficulties of measurement. The degree to which Harry S. Truman possessed political astuteness can be evaluated in comparison with his major adversary and with analysis of the circumstances surrounding the conflict. While it cannot be assumed that victory at the polls measures the calibre of the actors, it is helpful to relate the outcome to the choices and decisions that were made. The study suggests that the examination of Harry Truman's perception of other political situations, such as those existing in 1944, 1948, and 1952, would be rewarding and contribute to understanding of political behavior.

The present inquiry cannot be closed without reference to

certain difficulties in obtaining research material. The original hope that the Truman Library would yield sufficient documentation proved groundless. This disappointment found partial compensation, however, in the permission to examine the private papers of former Governor Lloyd C. Stark. These papers were housed by the Western Historical Society at Columbia, Missouri. They proved to be invaluable, notwithstanding the limitation placed upon their use that only the private papers pertaining directly to the 1940 primary be examined.

The material available was applied with diligence to the general concept of political astuteness of political actors and in the framework of the situations and circumstances of 1940 Harry S. Truman did not come off second best.

## APPENDIX

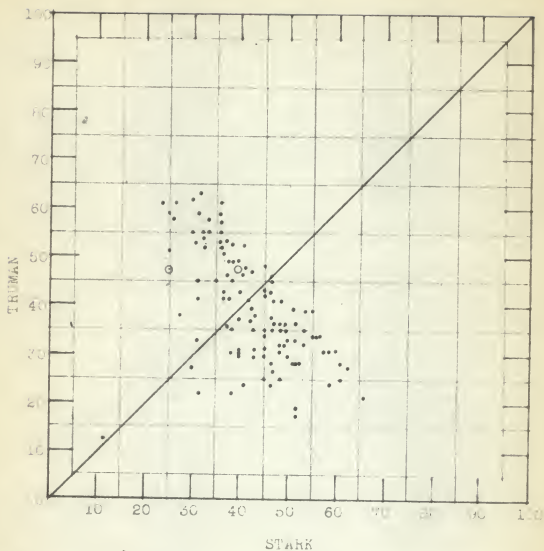


Fig. 1. Democratic Percentage of County Vote for Missouri Senatorial nomination, 1940.

(Percentages are determined by computing the total Democratic votes cast in each county with the total vote each Democratic candidate received.)

Kansas City

St. Louis City

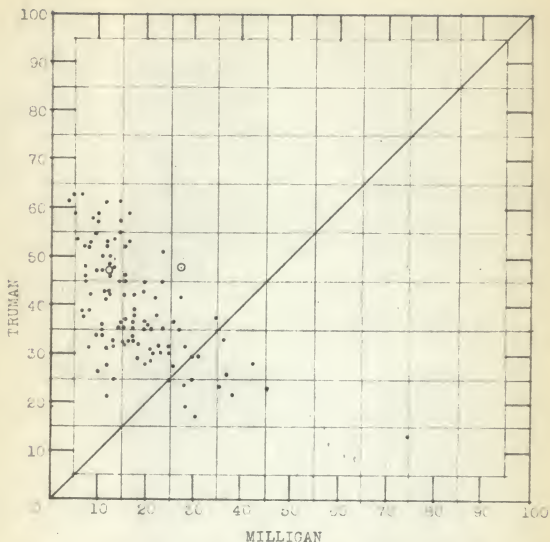


Fig. 2. Democratic Percentage Of County Vote for Missouri Senatorial nomination, 1940.

(Percentages are determined by computing the total Democratic votes cast in each county with the total vote each Democratic candidate received.)

Kansas City

St. Louis City

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HARRY S. TRUMAN  
SENATORIAL PRIMARY ELECTION  
OF 1940

by

JAMES JOSEPH MCGRAW

B. A., Oklahoma State University, 1955

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AN ABSTRACT  
OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1961

My interest in Harry S. Truman's senatorial primary election of 1940 as a thesis topic developed out of a meeting held between Truman and the members of Kansas State University's Political Science Club. This meeting awakened an interest to investigate the early political life of the individual who was reputed to be the "man from Pendergast" and a desire to obtain a better understanding of the political nature of the man who rose to the office of the Presidency even though he was closely allied with one of the most discredited political organizations in the United States.

This study is principally an inquiry into the political nature of Harry S. Truman. The selection of a party primary election afforded an opportunity to observe the practical politician in his own element, the political arena. The paper is concerned with situations and circumstances which actually occurred in the primary elections and how the political combatants reacted to these realities. The intention is not to analyze the voting behavior of the Missouri electorate, but rather to note how the successful politician reacts within his own sphere.

An inquiry into Truman's political career revealed that the issue of Pendergastism played an important role in the 1940 Missouri Democratic senatorial primary election. Chapter I is an attempt to indicate the major reasons for Thomas J. Pendergast's rise to the position of dominance in Missouri Democratic party politics and to relate the causes for his eventual removal from the political scene.

Chapter II is a background sketch of the three political

antagonists that vied for the senatorial nomination, Harry S. Truman, Lloyd Crow Stark, and Maurice Morton Milligan. This chapter also shows the relationship which each of the candidates had with Pendergast.

Chapter III is concerned with actual situations and circumstances of the campaign and how each candidate reacted to these realities.

The conclusion states that Truman acted as a political realist and that he was cognizant of the fact that issues and personal attacks alone do not determine elections. Truman realized that the delivery of the vote was essential and it was to this end that he concentrated his major efforts. Truman did not permit the issue of Pendergastism to dominate his own campaign. He realized that charges of guilt by association were being leveled at him by his opponents, but he refused to become involved in a series of denials. Truman permitted his adversaries to run against Pendergast, while he decided to secure the nomination on the strength of his Senate record.